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ABSTRACT

This case study discusses development of a partnership between a large, ethnically diverse suburban high school and a major research university located in a somewhat rural community 100 miles from Houston (Texas). Complementary needs spurred a June 1995 exploratory meeting involving district central administrators, representative faculty from each school department, the dean of the university's college of education, and key teacher education faculty. Providing best instruction and teachers for area youth became the conversational framework. Open, sincere conversations during 1995-96 built the foundation of trust and mutual respect that has characterized the partnership. Pivotal figures in building trust were the dean of the College of Education and the district's Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Services. The desire to provide best practice led to establishing the partner high school as a Center of Inquiry. The school is becoming a laboratory for maintaining a climate that values academic achievement, a constantly developing faculty, and opportunities for preservice student experiences. The high school's conceptual structure revolved about simultaneous renewal of the school and the teacher education program. Partners have learned valuable lessons about developing commonality of purpose and culture, cultivating mutual interests, enlarging teacher involvement, and synchronizing academic calendars. Included are two explanatory appendices. (MLH)

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A CASE STUDY IN DEVELOPING A HIGH SCHOOL PARTNER SCHOOL IN A RESEARCH I UNIVERSITY

presented by

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American Educational Research Association
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Introduction

Grossman and Stodolsky (1995) suggest that school reform on the high school level must be seen through the lens of subject matter and how the subject matters to secondary school teachers since the professional identity and the career-long professional development of high school teachers are centered on subject matter. Thus traditionally, high school teachers construct themselves through their subject matter specialties: I am an English teacher, I am a history teacher, I am a social studies teacher, I am a mathematics teacher, and so on. And to a greater extent than for preservice elementary teachers, preservice secondary teachers identify themselves as much or more with departments in colleges of arts and of science than with education departments. Additionally, the organizational structure of most American high schools is in the form of academic departments. Thus building successful university/school partnerships for simultaneous renewal of schools and teacher education on the high school level is a more difficult task than such renewal on the elementary level.

The Center for Educational Renewal and the Institute for Educational Inquiry at the University of Washington in recognition of the challenging task of developing high school professional development schools selected twelve teams working with partner high schools throughout the National Network for Educational Renewal to receive funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations to address this challenge. The partner high school in this study was one of those selected. The grant was used to further the development of the partnership and to share what was learned through the developmental process with other high schools interested in developing partnerships.

Case studies of high schools that have developed partnerships with colleges and universities may provide useful insights to overcoming barriers to successful partnerships. Donmoyer (1990) suggests various advantages to employing case studies, among which are allowing accessibility and permitting one to experience vicariously unique situations, and allowing one to "see through the researcher's eyes,"--to see things otherwise not seen.

This case study relates to the development of a high school partner school with a Carnegie I research university.

Case Study: The High School/University Partnership

Prior activities between the school district in this study and the College of Education at a Carnegie I university had been mutually positive in their results. For example, the school district had participated with the university in studies and solutions to the student dropout rate as well as in approaches to teachers as researchers. From that positive foundation, the school district initiated discussions with the university regarding the development of a high school in the district as a professional development school.

That collaboration in improving educational excellence cannot occur from topdown changes (see Maeroff, 1983; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was a lesson both institutions had learned over the years. Therefore in June 1995, an exploratory meeting was held at the selected high school involving school district central administrators, the high school administrators, representative faculty from each of the departments in the school, the dean of the university's College of Education, and faculty from key departments related to teacher education in the college.

School/University Profiles/Needs

The high school in this study is located 20 miles north of downtown Houston, Texas, in suburban Harris County. The area is a mix of residential, commercial, and agricultural use properties. Total enrollment in the school is over 3,000 and includes grade levels nine through twelve. The ethnicity of the school is 36% White, 30% African-American, 21% Hispanic, and 13% other. Students with disabilities total 8%, students with limited English proficiency total 15%, and students who are economically disadvantaged total 15%. The dropout rate overall is 2%; however, it is as much as 5% in some segments of the student population.

The demographics of the high school are changing dramatically in keeping with the demographical changes taking place in the state of Texas. The high school is recognized as a strong, competitive high school with a college preparatory curriculum and a wide variety of vocational training programs which include cosmetology, auto mechanics, health care science, vocational office education and four different cooperative work programs; the school district as a whole has been recognized as a "model school district" in a recent Texas School Performance Review.

The university in this study is located in a somewhat rural community, is 100 miles from Houston and is approximately 85 miles from the high school in this study. With an enrollment over 43,000 students, the university was recently listed as the third largest in the nation and is one of the largest sources of new teachers in the state. The College of Education, one of 10 colleges in the university, recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. Its five departments serve approximately 2;820 undergraduate students and 1,000 graduate students. The majority of undergraduate students are in the Department of Educational Curriculum and Instruction and the department offers NCATE approved programs at the baccalaureate elementary and secondary levels. Goodlad's Postulates undergird newly established undergraduate programs in teacher education that have moved toward community-based partnerships, strong collaborative relationships with public schools, and collaboration across the disciplines to deliver its innovative programs. U.S. News and World Report ranked the college's graduate program in the top 20 percent nationally in 1996.

How does a school in a large metropolitan area such as Houston, Texas, noted for its academic excellence maintain that excellence in a changing school population? How does such a school address the increasing problems students experience in learning? How does a school develop processes and procedures that enable teachers to experience success with an economically and ethnically diverse student population? There were questions that caused a felt-need to develop among the faculty at the high school.

How does a university with field-based education programs and located in a somewhat rural community provide for its students circumstances that are similar to those the students will face in their teaching careers? How does a university whose preservice teacher education population still remains largely anglo best prepare those students to successfully teach an economically and ethnically diverse public school population? These were questions that challenged the Carnegie I research university.

It was the needs of the high school and of the university that gave purpose for entering into a dialogue relating to the development of a partner high school in the school district. These needs placed students at the high school and students in the secondary teacher preparation program at the university at the center of the conversation. Given the nature of what Grossman and Stodolsky (1995) call content as context, the high school as a potential partner school developed in a unique way, for faculty at both the high school and at the university put aside personal and discipline-centered interests for the goal of providing the best instruction and teachers for our youth. Providing best instruction and teachers for our youth therefore became the framework within which discussions continued.

The Issue of Trust

Trust can be seen from multiple perspectives, among them the moral perspective. It is imperative that members in a partnership view each other as moral individuals, as individuals who will be accepting of the ideas of others, even when such ideas are of a critical nature, and for whom the idea of betrayal of any nature is unacceptable. In addition, the trust engendered must be of such a nature that open discussion and the sharing of differing views become the norm. It was only after the June 1995 meeting's open discussion related to the mutual benefits of collaboration, only after each faculty on its own campuses further discussed the support for collaboration, and only after continuing meetings of an Advisory Group made up of representatives from each of the institutions

meeting each month over a year's time that formal agreements were written. These papers put forth the basic concept/structure for a professional development school and the establishment of a joint appointment position funded by both institutions (see Appendix I). Open and sincere conversations over a period of time (1995-1996) built the foundation of trust and mutual respect that has developed in the partnership.

The Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Services in the school district was pivotal in these discussions and was central to building the trust needed in developing the partner high school. The need for the ongoing participation of a strong central office administrator is essential to the initiation of a secondary PDS. It became clear that this administrator's active participation in the conversations begun in the summer of 1995 was of primary importance in the development of the PDS, and his role was instrumental in gaining the district's school board formal approval of the PDS on May 7. 1996. The Assistant Superintendent's involvement not only gave support to the public school perspective, but provided his understanding of the district's five-year framework within which the high school could play a significant role as a PDS in assisting to reach several district goals.

The dean of the College of Education was also pivotal in these discussions and central to building the trust needed in developing the partner high school. She attended the initial meeting at the high school as well as the other general meetings. Her involvement not only gave support to the university perspective, but was crucial in the establishment of a joint position funded by both institutions.

Continual involvement of the district's central office personnel and of the college's dean's office continues to be central to building trust. Other components, however, are also important. In this regard, the structure of the Steering Committee has been significant. The work of the partner high school is directed by this Steering Committee and is composed of two high school students, four high school faculty, the principal, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, a parent, two preservice teachers,

four university faculty, the dean, and the individual holding the joint appointment. This Steering Committee is responsible for developing and adopting plans for each year, including direction for staff development and continuing education, the development and support of study teams and associated teacher research, and the development and support of a post-baccalaureate teacher education program. Additionally, the Steering Committee is developing an evaluation plan designed to monitor and evaluate the processes and outcomes of the partner high school. Such collaborative decision-making has proven pivotal in deepening the trust among all the members of the partnership.

The Issue of Central Goal

If the central goal of a partner high school is providing best instruction and teachers for our youth, what that best instruction is and who the best teachers are becomes a continuous journey, given the constant societal changes. Such a journey requires continuous inquiry into best practice for improving learning in conditions of cultural diversity as well as inquiry into what preparation of preservice students will best provide for best practice. These considerations led to the establishment of the partner high school as a Center of Inquiry. As a Center of Inquiry, the school is becoming a laboratory for maintaining a climate in which students value academic achievement, for maintaining a faculty that is continually growing, improving, and grappling with challenges presented by a changing student population, and for maintaining opportunities for preservice teacher experiences. The conceptual structure of the partner high school was thus designed for simultaneous renewal of the school and of the university teacher education program.

Two forms of teacher inquiry form the basis of professional development of school and university faculty in the partner high school. Study teams, involving groups of school-and-university-based faculty, administrators, and students, define and investigate problems of student learning. Teacher research projects, formulated as a result of study team

activity, extend the work of the study teams through more systematic investigation of problems.

For example, a Classroom Management Study Team was formed when teachers responded to a survey of concerns they had pertaining to the school. One of the most frequently mentioned concern was that of student conduct. When students do not behave in positive ways, learning is diminished and teacher morale is lowered.

The situation was explored, the study team designed both a Student Behavior Survey by which students were able to respond concerning their own behaviors at school and a Teacher Observation of Student Behaviors Survey by which teachers were able to record objectively the behaviors of students in their classes. The team reviewed administrative office summaries of student offenses resulting in placement in detention halls or the extension center. From all the data collected, it was concluded that the core of the problem was a lack of respect--for self, for authority, for property, for peers. Most of the behavior violations derived from the disrespect students manifested.

Team members researched what management systems had been formulated to deal with student behavior. Using the Internet, the Region VI Service Center, and the professional development library, much information was gained which is providing a basis for the district's Five-Year Education Plan Committee to improve student behavior. Two of the study team members are participating on the district committee.

Providing early field experiences that are similar to those preservice teachers will face in their teaching careers is being provided through distance learning. Partner high school teachers in the various teaching fields are volunteering to have their classes observed through interactive television. Using the partner school's teaching theater, a science teacher had his class observed by the university's educational psychology class. The students noted various aspects of methodologies used, of teacher behaviors, of student learning activities, and of learning outcomes. A debriefing/questioning session with the teacher through interactive television followed the class observation.

The Issue of Findings

Those of us involved in this partnership have learned much. For example, tensions between institutional and individual commitment and relationships diminish when both a high school's administration and faculty and a university's administration and faculty place concern on problems students experience in learning and on the processes and procedures that enable teachers to experience success with an economically and ethnically diverse changing school population and both institutions place concern on collaborating to find solutions to such challenges. When both high school and university students are the center of conversation, a common institutional and individual commitment emerges.

Working together to solve educational problems also makes clear the strengths of both high school and university faculty. A recognition of the commonalities among the different institutional cultures begins to outweigh their differences. A collegial relationship soon develops through program presentations and scholarly publications in which representatives of both cultures share their work.

Starting with small activities that involve mutual interests allows for progress to be made. Less is more is an important recognition in the early stage, for overly ambitious undertaking that may not bear fruit can affect the likelihood of building a successful partner high school.

Making a partner high school central to an organization provides a greater challenge, especially when the high school is large and its faculty and its staff numbers over 200. Enlarging the involvement of teachers in the school is necessary. One means by which that has been attempted has been to provide sessions on the partnership on staff development days when those already heavily involved from both the high school and university faculties shared their experiences with other faculty. It was out of such sessions that high school teachers previously less involved offered their classes for observation and interaction with university students.

Initiating a professional development school, however, is a slow process and hard work. Universities and public schools run on different "clocks" and calendar and time differences must be worked through in a mutually beneficial manner.

This partner high school as a Center of Inquiry may provide a model for developing a high school partner school with a Carnegie I research university. It would appear, however, that each partner school must develop its own model emerging from a purpose. And each purpose may be different. Structure without purpose is nothing. With purpose, it is everything.

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APPENDIX I

Concept Paper: Westfield High School as a Texas A&M University

Professional Development School

Role Description: Clincial Master Teacher

A Joint Appointment of Texas A&M University and Westfield High School

CONCEPT PAPER
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL
WESTFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Overview

The administration, faculty and staff of Westfield High School, Houston, Texas, and the administration and faculty of the College of Education, Texas A&M University, petition their respective institutions, the Spring Independent School District and Texas A&M University, to enjoin each other in this memorandum of agreement so that a Partnership Professional Development School may function on site at the campus of Westfield High School commencing with the fall 1996 semester and continuing forth until such time either party deems it necessary to sever the agreement. Although this agreement is legally non-binding, each party views this as a long-term partnership relationship.

This proposal is the result of in-depth discussions involving members of both faculties and seeks to connect theory to practice by recognizing and enhancing the role of the classroom teacher. The joint practices which this agreement encourages are in keeping with such efforts as the Goodlad Educational Renewal Postulates, established by John Goodlad and his associates at the National Network for Educational Renewal in Seattle, Washington, and with Tomorrow's School: Principles for the Design of Professional Development Schools, a report of the Holmes Group.

The purpose of this memorandum is to cite mutual desires of both faculties to improve educational practice. This written agreement exists so that the administrative leaders of the two participating institutions will better know what this effort is about, enabling them to better express their counsel and support. This memorandum of agreement will be reviewed annually.

Center of Inquiry

The primary focus of the partnership collaborative is without exception the education of Westfield High School students. Improving learning in conditions of cultural diversity is the selected theme for this partnership. This community of learners is understood to be the young learners, their teachers, their campus administrators and staff, and their parents as well as university professors and pre-service teachers at Texas A&M University, all of whom will comprise the membership of the Westfield High School Professional Development School.

Governance

The principal of Westfield High School and the dean of the College of Education, Texas A&M University will provide for the appointment and/or election of a steering committee. Members of this committee are the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instructional Services, building principal, clinical master teacher, classroom teachers (4), Westfield High School students (2), dean, College of Education, university faculty (4), and preservice teachers (2). This representative committee is advisory to the principal and the dean, will provide feedback to the represented constituents and will be responsible for proposals for needed annual resources, for establishing priorities of the partnership and for involving others in addressing these priorities.

Westfield High School/Texas A&M University as a Center of Inquiry

The steering committee will coordinate activities appropriate to a Center of Inquiry. The following are identified as initial activities:

1. the establishment as a joint appointment between Texas A&M University and the Spring Independent School District, the position of Clinical Master Teacher;
2. the establishment of Westfield High School as a student teaching site;
3. the establishment of Westfield High School for designated early field experiences;
4. the establishment of study teams and resultant teacher education research projects;
5. the establishment of staff development programs in educational curriculum and instruction;
6. the development of a post-baccalaureate teacher education program;
7. the development of an ongoing research and evaluation plan to study the processes and outcomes of the Professional Development School.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

CLINICAL MASTER TEACHER

A Joint Position of Texas A&M University and Westfield High School

March 1966

Introduction

The position described in this document emerged from discussion among faculty members of Westfield High School and the Texas A&M (TAMU) College of Education regarding establishing Westfield as a Professional Development School (PDS). Initial plans directed toward this end of organizing a collaborative center of inquiry included involving Westfield faculty in teacher research efforts through a project directed by TAMU faculty members beginning in the fall of 1995, creating at least one doctoral cohort group beginning in the summer of 1996, making Westfield a secondary school student teaching center in the fall of 1996, and providing supervision of student teachers (among other duties) through a faculty member jointly appointed by Spring ISD and TAMU, beginning in the 1996-97 school year.

Longer term plans, yet to be cemented, include establishing Westfield as a PDS involving a number of the following initiatives: (1) providing early field experiences for teacher education students on the Westfield campus, (2) maintaining and expanding Westfield's role as a student teacher center, (3) offering courses on the Westfield campus for students engaged in teacher education, (4) maintaining and expanding opportunities for local graduate study for Spring ISD faculty, (5) involving high school teachers, pre-service teachers and university faculty in study teams focused on problems Westfield High School students experience in learning and on the processes and procedures that enable teachers to experience success with an economically and ethnically diverse and changing student population, and (6) fostering and creating a framework for teacher research initiatives arising from the questions and problems investigated in the study teams.

A major move toward accomplishing the steps listed above would be the creation of the Clinical Master Teacher position.

Duties

Reporting to the Principal of Westfield High School and to the Head of the Department of Educational Curriculum and Instruction (EDCI) for Texas A&M University (TAMU), the duties of the occupant of the position include:

*Coordinates the development of the Westfield/TAMU initiative

*Serves as member of the Professional Development School Steering Committee

*Supervises student teachers

*Coordinates the activities and professional development opportunities of cooperating teachers

*Facilitates the work of study teams by involving Westfield faculty, TAMU faculty, pre-service teachers and others

*Encourages teacher research initiatives through giving assistance to Westfield faculty members and through facilitating the work of university researchers involved with Westfield faculty and TAMU pre-service teachers

*Coordinates arrangements for graduate course offerings associated with the TAMU-Westfield initiative

*Teaches two high school class(es) per day

*Performs other duties as assigned

Qualifications

Basic qualifications for the position include:

*successful experience as a high school teacher

*certification to teach a high school subject

*earned masters degree

Additional preferred qualifications include:

*successful experience supervising student teachers

*successful involvement with study teams and teacher research

*successful leadership experiences with colleagues

Term of Appointment

Assignment to the position will be effective for one year, with renewal subject to annual review

Evaluation

The individual serving in the position will be evaluated according to established Spring ISD and TAMU procedures.

Compensation

The occupant of the position will be compensated according to the Spring ISD salary scale for 190 day calender and will receive Spring ISD benefits.

Selection Process

The position will be advertised. A selection committee consisting of three members of the Spring ISD staff and three members of the TAMU faculty will interview candidates and recommend the preferred candidate to the Principal of Westfield H ;h School and the Head of the Department of Educational Curriculum and Instruction of E CI who will make the appointment.

Funding

The position will be funded jointly by TAMU and Spring ISD. MU will make a $7,000.00 grant to Spring ISD to help support the position. The remai ; costs will be funded by Spring ISD.